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Annual report of the United Nations Development Programme to the Economic and Social Council

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I. PURPOSE

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with paragraph 7 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/33 of 28 July 1994, in which the Council requested the United Nations development funds and programmes, through their Executive Boards, to include in their annual reports to the Council, which should have a common structure: (a) a section outlining measures taken in the implementation of the provisions of the triennial policy review of operational activities (General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 47/199); and (b) a section on the activities and measures undertaken within the designated theme for the high-level meeting of the operational activities segment. By its decision 1994/293, the Council decided that the high-level meeting of the operational activities segment of its substantive session of 1995 would consider as a principal theme the implementation of the programme of action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development. Other themes, including the outcome of the World Summit on Social Development, could also be considered by the high-level meeting.

2. The present document reflects the reporting format agreed upon among the secretariats of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 44/211 AND 47/199

3. In the course of 1994, UNDP continued to build on progress made in the previous year, reported on in document DP/1994/22, on various policy, programme and administrative measures introduced to implement provisions of resolution 47/199 relevant to the organization, namely with respect to the country strategy note (CSN), the harmonization of programming cycles, the programme approach, national execution, decentralization, the resident coordinator system, common premises and common training. UNDP also continued to collaborate with its United Nations partner organizations bilaterally and collectively through the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) International Training Centre in Turin to enhance the general implementation of the resolution.

Country strategy note

4. Based on information collected by UNDP at the end of 1994, the majority of programme countries do consider the CSN process as useful for priority setting, aid coordination and resource mobilization. At least 70 countries have initiated the preparation of CSNs and, in the course of the year, UNDP headquarters reviewed about 20 draft CSNs. It is anticipated that the CSNs will form an integral part of the preparation of the next series of programming for United Nations funds and programmes. In this context, the Executive Board, at its second regular session 1995, considered and approved UNDP and UNFPA

cooperation frameworks with Turkey and Indonesia that were based on the CSNs for those countries. UNDP continues to support the preparation of CSNs through the resident coordinator system and through national and regional workshops organized in conjunction with the ILO Turin Centre.

5. Among the non-participating countries, only seven have formally served notice that they will not undertake the CSN. The main reasons given include deference to the principle that national priority setting should remain a sovereign responsibility, that the relatively modest and declining levels of United Nations development system resource flows do not justify the preparation of a CSN and the contention that the national development planning processes of some countries do themselves provide adequate basis for programming by the United Nations development system. The rest of the programme countries remain undecided on the CSN and, in a number of instances, the difficult socio-political circumstances in the country preclude its preparation (Angola, Somalia, Liberia).

6. UNDP remains convinced of the substantial benefits of the CSN for both the programme countries and the donor community arising from extensive country-based consultations on national development priorities, integration of external cooperation into national development programmes and coordinated external cooperation programmes. For this reason, UNDP has taken note of and has supported the efforts of the United Nations development system under the leadership of the resident coordinator to develop coordinated responses in countries that may not formally be undertaking the CSN. The experiences in Pakistan in the preparation of the "Open Letter to the Government" and in Bangladesh in the preparation of the document "A Fork in the Path" are interesting and instructive cases in point. Both are based on known priorities of the Governments, both entailed extensive national-level consultations and both reflect a systems perception of how the United Nations can best provide coordinated support to national development efforts. Notwithstanding paragraph 9 of resolution 47/199 and in the interest of enhancing much-needed coherence and coordination of external assistance, UNDP will continue to support such country-level initiatives.

Harmonization of programming cycles

7. The process of harmonizing programming cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes is being undertaken under the auspices of the JCGP Subgroup on Harmonization and, within this group, UNDP has the responsibility for coordinating the effort in the Asia and Pacific countries.

8. Considerable progress has been made in harmonizing the programming cycles of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA in various programme countries around national planning cycles where feasible. In the past year, the United Nations funds and programmes have amply demonstrated their willingness to shorten or lengthen current cycles in order to achieve harmonization. Indications are that the targeted 80 per cent harmonization by 1996 will be achieved and possibly exceeded. However, it will not be possible to achieve harmonization in all countries owing to civil strife and other causes, unrelated to the United Nations programming process.

Programme approach

9. UNDP distributed its "Guidelines for Programme Support Document" (PSD) and its companion "Programme Support Implementation Arrangements" (PSIA) in November 1993 and February 1994 respectively. The PSD/PSIA comprise the operational instrument of the programme approach, outlining the nature of the national programme being supported, the rationale for UNDP support, capacity-building targets and the UNDP financial parameters.

10. A review of the mid-term reviews of fifth cycle programmes undertaken in 1994 shows that the programme approach has been applied mainly to new programming opportunities rather than to ongoing cooperative efforts. As many as 75 PSDs have so far been approved. Progress remains hampered by reduced programming opportunities as a result of the high levels of resource commitments to stand-alone projects carried over from the fourth cycle and the decline - even cut-backs - in new programmable resources.

11. To enhance the understanding and adoption of the programme approach, UNDP has prepared a training module, including a training video, and has contributed to the work on monitoring and evaluation guidelines on the programme approach through CCPOQ. UNDP is also collaborating with the ILO Turin Centre in the preparation of a programme approach training module for the United Nations specialized agencies in Geneva. In April 1994, UNDP participated in a mission led by the United Nations to China and India on country experiences with the application of the programme approach and national execution.

National execution

12. Following CCPOQ agreement on a common interpretation by the United Nations development system of the term "national execution" in March 1993, UNDP commenced work on reviewing its present guidelines on this modality. Revised guidelines, which simplify the adoption of the modality of national execution, without compromising accountability or increasing the administrative workload on the programme countries, were completed in June 1994 after extensive consultations at the country and headquarters levels.

13. Mid-term reviews of fifth cycle programmes undertaken in 1994 indicate that the modality of national execution remains widely accepted as essential for the development of national capacities to own, manage and sustain the development process. It is also cited for the possibilities it creates for long-term collaborative relationships between national institutions and external technical institutions through cooperating and implementation arrangements. In 1994, 53 per cent (or $545 million) of UNDP programme expenditure was through national execution, up from 34 per cent (or $406 million) in 1993. UNDP continues to support the use of this modality through, inter alia, its TSS-2 provisions, which facilitate substantive accountability and technical backstopping by the specialized agencies during implementation.

Decentralization

14. With offices in over 130 countries and 85 per cent of its staff located in the country offices, the greatest strength of UNDP lies in the delivery capacity

of its network. Accordingly, UNDP has taken measures to decentralize operational authority to the country offices in order to enhance responsiveness to country needs and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the country offices in resource utilization and programme delivery. The financial level of approval delegated to resident representatives has been raised to $1 million. Authority for procurement of goods and services has been increased to $100,000.

15. UNDP has also created regional service centres in Asia and Africa to provide financial management and accounting support to country offices.

Resident coordinator system

16. UNDP attaches particular importance to the service function of the resident coordinator system and to the need to strengthen it. Accordingly, UNDP has made significant commitments in staff, financial and other resources to the function, which has resulted in closer UNDP collaboration with its partner agencies through the JCGP and CCPOQ and with the United Nations Secretariat, both for humanitarian affairs and for peace-keeping and governance.

17. UNDP proposals to strengthen the resident coordinator system adopted at the high-level JCGP meeting in Bangladesh in February 1994, covered such aspects as broadening the resident coordinator selection process to include candidates from JCGP agencies, funding and staffing the coordination function, training country coordination teams (see paras. 22-23) and coordinating information. At least 40 per cent of current UNDP resident representatives have served in United Nations agencies other than UNDP in their careers, while six resident coordinators have been recruited directly from JCGP agencies.

18. In October 1994, the Administrator created the Office of United Nations System Support and Services (OUNS) as the focal point for resident coordinator matters. After due consultations, OUNS has developed and distributed a comprehensive management plan that identifies short- and long-term activities for strengthening the resident coordinator system. UNDP has also created a special $2 million fund from the Special Programme Resources (SPR) to support country-level coordination activities. This facility became operational in October 1994. Resident coordinators were also encouraged to tap other resources, such as the Development Support Services, on a continuing basis to support coordination initiatives. Other far-reaching proposals for funding and strengthening the resident coordinator system in the post-fifth cycle period have been presented for the consideration by the Executive Board in document DP/1995/15.

19. In addition, UNDP has been active in the CCPOQ Working Group on the Resident Coordinator System, which has reviewed and updated the terms of reference for resident coordinators. They have been approved by CCPOQ at its fifth session in February 1995. In late 1994, UNDP initiated a study to develop hitherto non-existent performance appraisal systems for the resident coordinator function, the results of which will be shared through CCPOQ.

Common premises

20. At the JCGP high-level meeting in Bangladesh in February 1994, agreement was reached to implement the United Nations system common premises (UNSCP) strategy in the programme countries. The strategy was based on a study by the JCGP Subgroup on Common Premises and Services (SGCPS/JCGP), which demonstrated the significant cost and other advantages for use of consolidated country-level premises and facilities for the JCGP agencies. The strategy is being implemented by the Common Premises and Services Programme Unit, located in UNDP and jointly funded by UNDP and UNICEF.

21. At its meeting in November 1994, SGCPS approved United Nations system common premises for Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Laos, Senegal and Trinidad and Tobago. The common premises in these countries will be constructed under the ownership/leasehold modality, the legal instruments for which were prepared by the United Nations Legal Office and approved at the high-level meeting in Bangladesh in 1994.

Common training

22. In the course of 1994, UNDP continued to contribute to curriculum development and provide staff and financial resources to the ILO International Training Centre, Turin, for the training of United Nations country coordination teams. So far, about 70 teams have been trained at the Centre and, in a number of cases, the training has been followed with in-country training for other members of the country coordination teams.

23. In September 1994, UNDP organized a pilot briefing for 19 newly appointed resident coordinators, which was designed to prepare them for representational roles and provide country-specific programme and managerial information. A UNDP/CCPOQ-sponsored advanced course for experienced resident coordinators will be held at the ILO Turin Centre in May 1995. UNDP also continues to support the Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP) in conjunction with the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs. In 1994, DMTP conducted 23 regional and national workshops and provided training materials requested by institutions in a number of countries. Other collaborative training initiatives undertaken in various programme countries have covered such topics as HIV/AIDS and the implementation of provisions of resolution 47/199, especially the preparation of CSNs.

III. FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

24. ICPD provided the world community with an opportunity to re-think old approaches to population and development and to explore new concepts: the fundamental role of women in the development process; reproductive health; the centrality of the individual in issues relating to reproduction; and the linkages between population, development and the environment. The challenges posed by the ICPD Programme of Action require collaborative action by the United Nations development system. UNDP plays a key role therein, both in terms of coordination and substance.

25. UNDP has developed an action plan for implementing the ICPD Programme of Action whose main components are: review of policies and guidelines to bring them in line with the ICPD Programme of Action; training on the messages emerging from the Conference; active participation in the ICPD Task Force, its Working Groups and other international ICPD follow-up activities; and joint inter-agency initiatives. In addition, UNDP has formulated a strategy paper that integrates the population factor into its sustainable human development framework. At the country level, the resident coordinator system has been accepted as the principal means of coordinating United Nations system implementation of the ICPD recommendations. This places a major responsibility on the resident coordinators, virtually all of whom are currently UNDP resident representatives, as well as on the representatives of UNFPA, who will be expected to serve as a key resource to all their other United Nations system colleagues in determining how best to integrate population concerns into the country's development frameworks.

26. UNDP has been facilitating the wide dissemination of the ICPD Programme of Action at the country level and, in conjunction with UNFPA, encouraging governments to develop national ICPD implementation strategies and to continue their national commissions on population and development. The ICPD Task Force is currently developing tools to facilitate the role of the resident coordinator in this respect. For example, guidance on implementing the basic education components of the ICPD, Education for All and the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) is being drafted for resident coordinators.

27. New and existing coordination tools for the United Nations system are being utilized to help implement the ICPD Programme of Action. For example, resident coordinators are advocating that CSNs be used to unite the programmes of the United Nations system around the goals and objectives of the ICPD. Consultative Group meetings and round-table meetings also present propitious opportunities for coordination and resource mobilization both within and beyond the United Nations system. Other more informal working groups, clustered around main components of the ICPD, are being established to insure unified United Nations system implementation of the Programme of Action at the country level.

28. These country groupings will shortly be reinforced by a consolidated United Nations system approach to multiconference follow-up currently being developed by UNDP and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. Through a series of inter-agency task forces, it will focus the system on the implementation of the goals and priority objectives of the main United Nations conferences held over the last five years.

29. Resident coordinators are being called upon to demonstrate commitment and leadership in implementing the far-reaching ideals embodied in ICPD, with due respect for national customs, traditions and policies. This important advocacy role at the country level requires the support, guidance and participation of all members of the United Nations system.

30. Although little funding is available for additional programming at this late stage of the fifth cycle, UNDP has recognized the critical importance of the ICPD agenda in complementing its development programmes. Fortunately, small changes in emphases to take better account of ICPD recommendations are often

possible with little or no additional inputs. For example, national poverty assessments and planning exercises can be expanded, at little extra cost, to emphasize population dynamics and the linkages between population, development and the environment.

31. Several interregional and global initiatives deserve mention in the context of UNDP follow-up to ICPD. The Joint Programme: Strengthening National Capacities to Reduce Maternal Deaths and Disabilities Programme, brings together the respective expertise of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and regional development banks, international financing institutions, NGOs, universities and research centres around one of the central topics of ICPD. The programme aims at assisting countries through capacity-building: country needs assessments; action plans at the national, provincial and district levels; consensus-building; technical support for effective implementation; monitoring and evaluation. This programme evolved as the operational mechanism to stimulate and support the development and implementation of effective and sustainable programmes at the national level. Its focus represents the foundation on which the rest of the reproductive health superstructure must be built. As such, its activities form an integral part of the follow-up to ICPD.

32. The ICPD Programme of Action places HIV/AIDS squarely within the framework of reproductive health. UNDP is an active partner in the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. The programme draws on the strengths of its six co-sponsors (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO and the World Bank) to: prevent the transmission of HIV; reduce the suffering caused by HIV and AIDS; make the broader environment conducive to prevention and supportive of people with HIV/AIDS; and cushion the harsh impact of the epidemic on individuals, communities and societies. An important component of the programme is the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS considerations into the co-sponsors' plans, programmes and activities at the country, interregional and global levels.

IV. FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

33. The World Summit on Social Development concluded on 13 March 1995 with the plenary adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action outlining, inter alia, 10 commitments on people-centred sustainable development; the eradication of absolute poverty; the promotion of full employment and sustainable livelihoods; and social integration. It established the primacy of national responsibility for social development and the imperative that policies and programmes be nationally owned and driven, and invited the United Nations development system to strengthen and adjust its programmes or strategies, as appropriate, to take into account the follow-up to the Summit (see Declaration and Programme of Action, chap. V, para. 96 (b)). Significantly, UNDP was called upon to continue to undertake efforts to support the implementation of the social development programmes, taking into account specific needs of the countries with economies in transition (para. 97 (b)) and organize United Nations system efforts towards capacity-building at the local, national and regional levels, and support the coordinated implementation of social development programmes through its network of field offices (para. 99 (a)).

34. In the course of 1994, UNDP supported numerous country and regional activities related to the preparation for WSSD through SPR and regular programmes. In anticipation of a significant lead role in supporting countries implementing the outcome of the Summit, UNDP established a WSSD follow-up strategy group, in February 1995, which will work with country offices and country-level partners to assist them in developing specific strategies and programmes for implementing the WSSD Programme of Action.

35. WSSD commitments closely parallel the UNDP core mission and strategy as outlined in Initiatives for change (DP/1994/39), submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session 1994 and formalized in Board decision 1994/14. The central WSSD goal, "people-centred sustainable development" (para. 26 (a)), encapsulates the concept of sustainable human development (SHD). In addition, WSSD called for a strengthened framework of international cooperation (Commitment 10), a closer integration of United Nations system activities in pursuit of social development (Commitment 8) and a greater concentration of resources on social development goals and priorities (Commitment 9). These reflect the UNDP goals outlined in Initiatives for change. Also, three of the four UNDP focus areas serve as key commitments of WSSD: eradication of poverty (Commitment 2); job creation and sustainable livelihoods (Commitment 3); and gender equality and equity (Commitment 5). The fourth, environmental protection and regeneration, while not a specific commitment, was identified as one of the principles of the framework for action (para. 26).

36. In short, there is a high degree of consistency between the directions and strategic priorities outlined in Initiatives for change and the WSSD Programme of Action. UNDP is in a strong position to respond quickly and concretely to the challenges of the WSSD follow-up. Elements considered for a UNDP follow-up strategy include:

(a) Offer of immediate support to countries in integrating WSSD and related conference agreements into their long-term development plans and frameworks, particularly strategies for the eradication of poverty;

(b) Dialogue among United Nations specialized agencies and other international development cooperation partners on the integration of follow-up strategies. Use will be made of WSSD follow-up as a rallying point for improved aid coordination and cooperation;

(c) A possible capacity development window for WSSD follow-up, comparable to Capacity 21, to give clear effect to the UNDP mandate in this regard (para. 99 (a)). National partnership facilities will be a key element of this strategy, facilitating the mobilization of funds for national capacity-building and the coordination of activities in this area.